

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



# FACTSHEET

.....

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

May 1995

## The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

"Protecting American agriculture" is the basic charge of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). APHIS provides leadership in ensuring the health and care of animals and plants. APHIS improves agricultural productivity and competitiveness and contributes to the national economy and the public health.

The professional APHIS workforce strives to meet the needs of an ever-expanding customer base. The agency uses state-of-the-art technology to keep up with trends in agriculture and international trade and other pertinent issues.

APHIS has six major program areas: Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ); International Services (IS); Veterinary Services (VS); Regulatory Enforcement and Animal Care (REAC); Biotechnology, Biologics, and Environmental Protection (BBEP); and Animal Damage Control (ADC). In carrying out the APHIS mission, employees in these program areas perform the following functional activities:

### Protecting Our Borders

- We guard U.S. borders against the entry of foreign agricultural pests and diseases. At airport terminals, seaports, and border stations, PPQ officers search international conveyances and the baggage of passengers for plant and animal products that could harbor either plant or animal pests or disease organisms. At international airports, detector dogs in USDA's Beagle Brigade help us find prohibited agricultural materials. Our PPQ officers also inspect ship cargoes, rail and truck freight, and mail from foreign countries. At animal import centers, our veterinarians check imported animals during quarantine to make sure they are not carrying any foreign disease.

- Overseas, we operate preclearance programs to eliminate pests in imported products at their source. Our IS officials stationed in foreign countries maintain a comprehensive information network on the status of animal and plant pests and diseases around the world. They exchange technical information with foreign governments and international groups. Our IS officials also conduct cooperative agricultural pest and disease control and eradication programs in foreign locations.

### Combating Pests and Diseases

- In this country, we search for and monitor animal and plant pests and diseases. If foreign pests get past our border defenses, we take emergency action to eliminate the threat to our agricultural productivity quickly.

- In cooperation with State animal health agencies, VS employees combat certain domestic animal diseases, including cattle and swine brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, pseudorabies in swine, and scrapie, a disease of sheep and goats.

- We fight certain domestic plant pests, including boll weevils, witchweed, and gypsy moths. Our plant pest programs emphasize biological control and integrated pest management. To prevent the spread of certain domestic plant pests, we cooperate with and provide technical assistance to State plant health agencies.

- Through health certification of animals and plants and agricultural products for international shipments, we facilitate agricultural exports. APHIS helps negotiate entry requirements for U.S. agricultural products. We assist U.S. agricultural exporters by providing health certification and help improve the U.S. balance of payments.

### Caring for Animals

- We enhance the care of animals used in research, exhibition, and the wholesale pet trade through enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act. We enforce the Horse Protection Act to prevent the use of cruel

practices to accentuate the gait of show horses. Our REAC investigators help other units within APHIS carry out their regulatory responsibilities. While our objective is to bring people into compliance, those who violate regulations and standards will be prosecuted to the extent of the law.

- We make sure veterinary biologics are safe, pure, potent, and effective.

## **Protecting the Environment**

- One of the most recent and important trends in agriculture has been the development of the agricultural biotechnology industry. APHIS ensures the safety of introducing into the environment agricultural products of biotechnology. Our scientists analyze the potential effects of introducing such genetically engineered organisms as a squash plant that has been genetically altered to be resistant to specific plant viruses. If, after careful review, our BBEP scientists determine that such an introduction will not be harmful, they issue a permit for the organism's release and movement. In this area, we work closely with our counterparts in the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Food and Drug Administration.

- We reduce wildlife damage to agriculture and natural resources, minimize potential wildlife threats to human health and safety, and help protect threatened and endangered species. Our ADC wildlife biologists help farmers, ranchers, and all American citizens learn how to "live with wildlife." In carrying out our mission of animal damage control, we cooperate with and provide technical assistance to a wide variety of groups and organizations, including Federal, State, local, and private organizations plus foreign governments and international organizations.

- In all of our activities, we analyze the environmental impacts of our programs to make sure that they comply with all environmental laws and regulations.

## **Summary**

To summarize, APHIS brings food to your table, stimulates global economies, safeguards agricultural resources, and protects and enhances ecosystems. In short, when America sits down for dinner, APHIS helps set the table.